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Exec. Summary



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RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

PROPOSAL FOR CITIZEN REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents recommendations for citizen review for revising the Recreation and Open Space Element of the San Francisco Master Plan. This element of the Master Plan identifies city objectives, policies and priorities for open space and recreation to be implemented by the City, state and federal agencies, as well as the private sector.

The existing Recreation and Open Space Element, hereafter called the Element, dates from 1973. The Department is proposing to revise the Element because many conditions have changed since the Element was adopted by the City Planning Commission. The Element has served its function well. It set out objectives and policies for public recreation and open space and proposed sites for public acquisition. Many of these sites have been acquired and developed and are parks and public open space today. Many of the objectives and policies of the 1973 Element are retained without any changes in the proposed revised Element. However, certain conditions and opportunities have changed in the intervening years, necessitating revision of some policies and addition of new policies.

The proposed revision is organized in the same format as the 1973 Element. It calls for the City to work at regional, citywide, and neighborhood levels to improve recreation and open space, and also to improve recreation and open space opportunities along the shoreline. In addition, the Element as proposed, would incorporate open space objectives and policies for the Downtown district, as adopted in the Downtown Plan.

Existing objectives and policies and proposed changes in Master Plan policies are summarized below:

THE BAY REGION

For the Bay Region, the objective is to preserve regional open space lands. The proposal continues to support formation of a regional open space agency that would have powers to acquire and manage regional open space. Proposed new policies call for greater access to regional open space already in public ownership, and creation of regional hiking and bicycle trail routes. The proposal also calls for increased coordination with existing regional open space agencies.

THE SAN FRANCISCO SHORELINE

Recreation opportunities have changed along the San Francisco shoreline. A major change was the creation of the federally managed Golden Gate National Recreation Area, GGNRA, which has jurisdiction over much of the the City's western, and northern shorelines. In addition, Candlestick Point State Recreation Area which was identified in the 1973 Element for acquisition has also become a reality on the Bay shoreline.

Much still needs to be done to improve recreational opportunities along the shoreline. The proposed revision identifies specific policies and actions to improve recreational opportunities at many locations. The proposal continues to call for incorporation of open space in new private development and for acquisition of new open space, particularly along the industrialized Bay shoreline, consistent with continued maritime operation. At specific shoreline locations the Proposal would change policies, and add or delete text.

THE CITYWIDE RECREATION SYSTEM


On the citywide level, the proposal retains the 1973 Element's objective to develop a balanced system of recreation and open space. Existing policies call for preserving existing open space and acquisition of additional open space. A number of new policies are proposed. These include:

- o Preservation of solar access to public parks.
- o Development of an urban trail system to link parks and public open space.
- o Comprehensive management of the Urban Forest (consisting of trees in city parks and open spaces and street trees).
- o Requiring creation of public open space in certain private residential development.

In addition, the proposed revision adds guidelines to provide for more equitable geographic distribution of parks and public open space throughout the city when locations for new parks and public open space are being considered.

NEIGHBORHOOD OPEN SPACE

At the neighborhood level, the objective is to provide opportunities for recreation in every San Francisco neighborhood. The proposal retains the objective and policies for neighborhood recreation and open space that call for the City to acquire additional neighborhood park and recreation space, and to prioritize acquisition in areas that need them most.



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Significant recreation improvements have been made in most areas identified as 'high need' in the 1973 Element. However, while some new parks have been created, some areas continue to have priority for recreation improvements. The proposal identifies priority areas based on geographic distribution of open space, and demographic characteristics of the population that include high residential density, low income, and high concentrations of young children and senior citizens. These areas include Chinatown, the North of Market area, South of Market, and parts of the Mission, Hayes valley/Western Addition, and Bayview/Hunters Point.

The proposal also identifies housing opportunity areas which have little open space now, but which would require parks and public open space if developed with significant amounts of new housing. These areas include Rincon Hill, Mission Bay, Rincon Point-South Beach Redevelopment areas, and several other S.F. Redevelopment Agency sites throughout the city.

Neighborhood parks and open space continue to need ongoing maintenance. However, many neighborhood parks and recreation facilities, as well as other parts of the Citywide system, have been in existence for many years and require extensive renovation of infrastructure, buildings, playground equipment, and planting, in order to better serve park users. Renovation is becoming a major task in the years ahead. The proposal therefore identifies renovation of existing park and recreation facilities as a new priority.

THE DOWNTOWN

This section is new. Under the proposal, the Recreation and Open Space Element would identify City objectives for open space in the downtown district. While these objectives are new to the Open Space Element, they are part of the Downtown Plan, which was publicly reviewed and adopted by the City Planning Commission on Nov. 29, 1984. The objectives for the downtown area are to:

- o Provide quality open space in sufficient quantity and variety to meet the needs of downtown workers, residents, and visitors.
- o Create an open space system accessible to and usable to everyone downtown.
- o Provide contrast and form by consciously treating open space as a counterpoint to the built environment.

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